http://cleanprint.net/cp/hs?hsid=1190311221847_330.gif

Griego: Struggling   
students reflect   
system we've   
created

**By Tina Griego***Denver Post Columnist*Posted: 02/27/2011 01:00:00 AM MST

If 8x + 5x + 2x + 4x = 114,   
  
then 5x + 3 =  
  
a. 12 b. 25 c. 33 d. 47 e. 86  
  
In the fall of 2009, 8,274 recent high school   
graduates who were first-time college students   
entered the state's community college system.   
Most incoming freshmen take the Accuplacer   
test to determine whether they need remedial   
classes in reading, writing or math. It's not a   
pass or fail exam. Accuplacer takes a snapshot   
of ability and then recommends the appropriate   
level of course work. It has proven to be a largely   
accurate measure.  
  
Just over half of that fall 2009 freshmen group   
needed at least one remedial class, which is a

slight improvement over previous years. The cost   
to the state was $19 million, not including the   
$6.7 million in tuition paid by students. The more   
remediation a student needs, the less likely he   
or she is to graduate, particularly with a four-  
year degree. This is just another way to say the   
$26 million doesn't come near the actual cost of   
having so many students enter college   
unprepared.  
  
The campus with the highest percentage of first-  
time freshmen enrolled in remedial classes was   
the Community College of Denver. Of the 946   
students, nearly 69 percent were taking at least   
one remedial class. Most needed help in math.   
Almost 300 needed help in all three core   
subjects: math, reading and writing.   
  
  
  
"Writing a best seller had earned the author a   
sum of money and had freed him from the   
necessity of selling his pen for the political   
purposes of others."  
  
Rewrite, beginning with: "The author was not   
obliged . . ."  
  
The new sentence will include:  
  
a. consequently he earned b. because he had   
earned c. by earning d. as a means of earning.  
  
  
  
Overall, about half of CCD's 8,485 students were   
enrolled in remedial courses in 2009-10. I'm

Advertisement

most interested in the recent high school   
graduates who, theoretically, just spent 12, 13,   
14 years learning to read, write and do math.   
  
"We don't deal in should'ves here," Nancy Story,   
dean of the college's Center for Educational   
Advancement, tells me. "We just want to know   
where you are."  
  
About 8,500 Accuplacer tests were given last   
year at the center, says CCD Testing Center   
director Ramzi Munder. A few years back,   
Munder looked at a group of about 2,000   
students who took the Accuplacer at the center   
and teased out those who were college-ready.   
This group would include a wide range of   
students, not just recent high school graduates.  
  
"What do you think the percentage was?" he   
asks.   
  
"Ten percent," I guess.  
  
"Two percent," he says. "This is a big job, and it's   
really hard," he says. "I'm a math teacher, and I   
have students who will say, 'But, sir, I was in   
algebra II in high school, and I made A's. ' "  
  
I can feel hackles rising across the ranks of high   
school teachers everywhere, so touchy this   
subject is. But Munder recognizes the problem   
for what it is: systemic.  
  
"Everyone has to take some accountability,"   
Munder says.  
  
"Most people collect "Star Wars" toys for

sentimental reasons. Some people collect them   
strictly to make money."  
  
What is the relationship between the two   
sentences?  
  
a. Cause and effect b. Contrast c. Repetition d.   
Statement and example.  
  
  
  
Of course, I had to take the Accuplacer. I wanted   
a sense of this diagnostic tool but also of the   
level of ability that is considered remedial. I've   
included a few study problems in math, writing   
and reading here. The first problem on my test   
was similar to that beginning this column. I had   
to keep from laughing out loud. The last time I   
took algebra was in 1983, and I got a D.  
  
The problems ratchet up and down in difficulty,   
depending upon correct and incorrect responses.   
Three to four levels of remediation exist for e  
very core subject. The most basic math level   
covers addition, subtraction, fraction   
conversions, ratios, essentially elementary-  
school math. Student ability is further tested by   
instructors, who give their own assessments   
during the first week of class.   
  
I receive my results immediately. I'm remedial-  
math bound, slotting into intermediate algebra,   
here called Math 090. I'd have to complete this   
and one more remedial class to reach college-  
level math. I'm good to go in reading and writing,   
and if I hadn't been, I would have written today   
about the cute puppy with a missing leg down

Advertisement

the street.  
  
This is just one stop on the remedial-ed pipeline.   
It is, in terms of the overwhelming number and   
need, not unlike an emergency room. Diagnose.   
Stabilize. But the view from this vantage point is   
not all that different from anywhere else along   
the pipeline. What you see are well-intentioned, h  
ardworking people fully aware of the problem.   
What you see is a landscape dotted by players   
who are always changing — your principals, your   
superintendents, your college presidents. What   
you see is the way in which the landscape itself   
shifts. Initiatives barely taking root only to be   
supplanted. Politics influencing philosophy   
influencing programs. A system combatting its   
own inconsistencies. Houses built on quicksand.   
The results are not surprising.  
  
*Tina Griego writes Sundays, Tuesdays and   
Thursdays. Reach her at 303-954-2699 or* [*tgriego@denverpost.com*](http://ezurl.co/506111)*.*

**Answers**

C, B, B